



## woodchuck

*Marmota monax*

Kingdom: Animalia  
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates  
Class: Mammalia  
Order: Rodentia  
Family: Sciuridae

### Features

The woodchuck is 17 to 24 inches long (including the tail) and weighs up to 14 pounds. It has a reddish-brown back with scattered black hairs. Most hairs have white tips. The front legs and hind feet are black. The nose, lips, and chin are white. The legs and tail are short. It also is called "groundhog" which obviously comes from the animal's squat appearance, waddling gait, and habit of living in the ground.

### Natural History

The woodchuck lives in brushy or weedy areas, forest edges, fencerows, railroad embankments, and dams. It is adapting and appearing in all kinds of habitats. It avoids areas that are subject to flooding. It is an herbivore that eats clovers, grasses, bulbs, leaves, fruits, and bark. When disturbed, it will strike its incisors against one another. It usually is active during the day. The woodchuck may dig tunnels up to five feet long in one day and is known to swim and climb trees. It spends most of each day in its burrow, coming

above ground for no more than two hours each day. The woodchuck is a true hibernator. It hibernates from October to February. Mating occurs in February and March. Young are born in the burrow in April. Young woodchucks are helpless at birth and do not leave the burrow until they are six weeks old. Reproductive maturity is attained in the second year.

### Habitats

interior rivers and streams; bottomland forests

### Iowa Status

common; native

### Iowa Range

statewide

### Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.